

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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*The only UK magazine dedicated
to vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello again, and after our long summer break, here we are with Issue 58 September 2011. Now, the more observant among you may already have checked the date on the front cover; the less observant might like to go and check your June issue. Yes, I've cocked up again! It's not the first time it's happened, but it is the first time I've got the issue number wrong as well as the month. So for future reference, the last magazine was Issue 57 June 2011, not Issue 56 May 2011 as appeared on the front cover (that was the previous month). Hope that's clear and that you're all nowhere near as confused as me. Anyway, I'll try to be more careful in future (although I've probably said that on previous occasions).

Talking of the summer break, I guess most of us are still waiting for it to happen! Has this been a crap summer, or did I just imagine it? Brighton's been total rubbish; in fact, this has been my worst ever year. Now, I'm not going to moan here, because Sharron keeps moaning that I moan too much. Suffice to say, if Brighton is no better next year, I shall be looking for a new site. And it's not just the weather. The punters aren't coming out, and those that do aren't spending any bloody money. I'm sick to death with hearing what a bumper time seaside resorts are having this year, with record visitor numbers – well, I don't know where the buggers are going, but it's certainly not Brighton. Er, am I starting to moan? I'll shut up.

Changing the subject completely, it's time to start thinking about the Coventry auction. Yes, we are fast approaching that time of year when we all gather for the biggest annual event in the slotties' calendar. The entry forms will be included with the October magazines, which I hope to get out fairly early in the month. As this issue (Sept.) is probably going to be late as usual, you should expect the October issue in a couple of weeks. So, get ready to fill in those forms.

All the best

Jerry

News and Coming Events

Hollycombe at Night

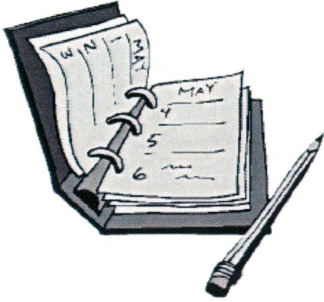
Could there be anything more atmospheric than a vintage fairground, with those familiar sounds and smells taking us back to our younger days? Well how about a vintage fairground at night? The Hollycombe Steam Museum will be operating the fairground on Saturday evenings, from 17th September until 22nd October.

If you have never visited Hollycombe, it is an absolute must (at any time of day)! There is much to see and do, although the fairground is without doubt the centrepiece of the collection. Powered almost entirely by steam, Hollycombe's vintage fairground is the largest in the country, and boasts some extremely rare machines. Included are a unique single steam yacht and a Howcroft Razzle Dazzle, the sole surviving ride of its type anywhere in the world.

The Hollycombe collection is located in Liphook, Hampshire. Details can be found on the website www.hollycombe.co.uk



Hollycombe's unique single steam yacht, 'Neptune'.



Dates for your diary

Fairground at Night 17th September – 22nd October
Hollycombe, Liphook, Hampshire

MMM Vintage Coin-Op Collectors' Auction 27th November
Coundon Social Club, Coventry

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 29th November
Knowle

2012

Brighton Jukebox Show 28th & 29th April
Brighton race course

Don't forget – if you know of any event which would be of interest to readers of the magazine, please let me know so that I can include details on this page.

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update September 2011

The big news over the summer was the decision by English Heritage to upgrade the listing status of the Scenic railway from Grade II to Grade II*. This is wonderful news. The Scenic Railway was listed Grade II in March 2002, and this amendment to its status is an entirely appropriate recognition for this rare and vulnerable structure, coincidentally coming exactly 10 years after I first wrote to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in July 2001 asking them to consider listing the ride. It puts the Scenic Railway into the top 6% most important listed buildings in the country. This is a great springboard for the restoration works that will be starting on the ride over the coming months. More news on that very soon.

Thanet District Council served a Compulsory Purchase Order on the various owners of the Dreamland site on 3 June. The order has been served on the entire Dreamland site, not just the amusement park section. The remainder of the site will be used for car parking, events, an area of open space and for the future expansion of Dreamland. Dreamland's owners, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company Ltd, has formally objected. There is now therefore likely to be a public inquiry.

An application for £3m of Heritage Lottery funding was submitted on 28 July and has been confirmed received by HLF. We anticipate a decision in November.

The latest controversy to hit Margate is the proposed Tesco development on the Arlington site overlooking Dreamland. If this development goes ahead, the future backdrop to the Scenic Railway will be the blank rear wall of the supermarket and a service yard. English Heritage will now be considering whether the proposed store will harm the setting of the Scenic Railway following its upgrade to Grade II* status.

The Council had resolved to grant permission for the redevelopment, but the upgrading of the Scenic to Grade II* prior to the decision being issued has resulted in the council agreeing to reconsider the application (following a threat of legal action by a solicitor instructed by objectors if they did not). The main issue is whether the new development will harm the setting of the Grade II* listed structure and/or the setting of the group of three listed buildings on Dreamland, the group value of which was partly the reason for the upgrading of the Scenic listing.

The saucy seaside postcard exhibition (I Wish I Could See My Little Willy) in July and August, funded by Kent County Council and the British Cartoon Archive, was a great success with 2,200 people attending. Both the visual talks and radio play at the Margate Museum were full to capacity.

Carter's Steam Fair operated on the Dreamland site for an extended nine days from 28 May to 5 June to coincide with the Ace Café Margate Meltdown. Apart from the Bank Holiday Monday, visitor numbers were down on last year. Nationally spending was low in May following high spending attributed to the unexpectedly good weather over the Easter holidays, the royal wedding and extra bank holidays.

Next issue I hope to be able to bring you news of the Scenic Railway and Cinema works, the former which are yet to start, the latter which are now well under way.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

www.dreamlandmargate.com

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NEW BOOK RELEASE

Mr Warwick's Revolving Towers

by Martin Easdown and Linda Sage

The story of a failed seaside attraction in Great Yarmouth, Morecambe, Scarborough, Southend-on-Sea, Douglas and Cleethorpes.

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Format: Paperback

Number of Pages: 72

Publication Date: 2011

Publisher: Martin Easdown and Linda Sage

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Cleethorpes



Before My Time Part One

By Robert Rowland

I have written articles for this magazine in the past about my memories of the local amusement arcades here in Mablethorpe in the 1960s, yet I've always wondered what it would have been like a little earlier, in the 1950s. So I asked a good friend of mine who was about at that time. His name is David Lascelles, and here's what really happened:

The saga of the modified penny

As young lads living in a coastal resort in the 1950s, we spent rather a lot of our time during the summer holidays succumbing to the attraction of the amusement arcades. This was mainly in the years before the one-armed bandit era, but we were well catered for by wall machines, pintables and a great variety of novelty machines: Execution, Misers Last Moment, Headball and Ahrens Piledriver, plus cranes of various types. You could print your name on aluminium strips and stop the train at the station etc. Before the advent of super nudge, multi-shuffle and large jackpots, the arcades lived up to their name, and were for amusement.

The biggest snag was, of course, having enough coins to play the machines, when faced with six or seven weeks holiday. We were not in the big league when it came to pocket money, because although it was only a tanner for a cheap cinema ticket, and a bag of chips was anything from 3d upwards, to take those out of 1/6d (one shilling and sixpence) or two bob, didn't leave much for playing the arcades. Of course, we went beach combing, pop-bottling (taking empties back to cafes and sweet shops) and mushrooming (when in season in September). We also went 'luggaging' on Saturday mornings (cases on the barrow, Sir?). We sometimes got a few bob with a long haul from the railway station to the caravan sites at the north end of the town. These activities helped feed our enjoyment with the arcade machines, but not totally!

Through the seasons, we acquired certain techniques to help stretch out our coin supplies. I will point out that this was in a milder age – it was technically wrong of course, but at least it wasn't the grand scale looting that goes on today. We never jemmied machines open, drilled through cabinets or smashed anything. The other factor was, anything we won usually went straight back into other machines, and we generally went home broke – not every time, but usually! I point this out because readers seeing all the admissions in one chapter might conclude that we ranked on a par with Capone or Legs Diamond. Thus having set the scene.....

We gradually learned that there were various ways of winning some play coins, having graduated from lying flat on the concrete floor and scraping about beneath the machines with a bamboo stick. The arcade management didn't appreciate the accumulation of fag packets, cigarette ends and lollypop wrappers suddenly appearing strewn all over a recently swept floor, so more sophisticated methods were developed.

The oldest gag was 35mm film, a short strip of which could be slipped inside the coin slide of a pintable and pushed in. The presence of the film acting on the coin detector allowed the slide full entry to start the game, and of course the film came back out with the slide. With legalised play, the penny would do the same, the difference being that the detector would flip the penny down into the coin box. Of course, this activity became familiar with the arcade staff, who were constantly on the lookout for shifty local school kids, glancing their way before playing a pintable.



A nice arcade shot, c. late 50s or early 60s. Steer-a-Ball being played in the foreground.

So it was necessary to invent a better, less obvious procedure, and it manifested itself one day following a struggle by one of our crowd trying unsuccessfully to force a mutilated coin into a slot. We adjourned after discussion to a friend's dad's work shed, where we proceeded to modify the diameter of a penny, by tapping it gently around the edge with a ballpeen hammer. Eventual success was achieved; we lost a couple of the first attempts, but rejoiced upon the re-emergence of the masterpiece. This penny worked well for us every time, scoring many wins. We had to take care not to over do it, as the sudden string of wins may have raised suspicions (you had to go and claim your 3d or 6d prize each time for achieving 10,000 or whatever the winning target was). Sometimes the attendant would come and watch us play, looking for 35mm film or a malfunction of the machine. On these occasions, of course, it was necessary to play correctly, usually using up the coins we had just gained.

Alas, all good things have to come to an end, and the widened penny was no exception. Our favourite machine was a flipperless pinball called Grand National, where the balls in play advanced a selection of horses to the finishing line. The numbered horse and the announced prize changed on each game; some horses were easier to advance than others due to the position of the bumpers on the playdeck. Our ever faithful number 2 was always a dead certainty to win if played for, number 5 never won, and so on. It therefore became the norm to re-insert the slide if a dud horse came up or if the win was only 2d. The best selection was number 2 (of course) with a prize of 6d, or even 10d (the top prize).

One day I made the mistake of playing the race game on a slack day (not many punters to act as diversions or obscure a clear view) and without a companion to act as an observer. Concentrating on operating the game with good odds, I was pushing the slide in and out, changing the horses and target scores, and not looking back towards the staff. Our arch enemy was Noel, who having the advantage of only a few punters, had found the opportunity to survey what was going on around the pintable machines. He must have noticed the display of lights on the back flash going on and off at a speed beyond his satisfaction. And then, suddenly, there he stood at my elbow, watching. I played the machine carefully, and oh so slowly, hoping to hell that he would go away, which he did not. I even dug a hand into my pocket and jingled some coins to show him I had money. I suppose that his eye was on the penny in the coin slide, waiting for the next game. Eventually (gulp) with Noel still breathing down my neck, the game finished. I knew that I couldn't fool him by holding the next penny over the emerging slide. I pushed the slide in; the table reset; I slid the coin slide out slowly, trying to halt it as soon as the ball release was reached. It didn't work! The hawk-eyed sod had seen the penny coming out, so I legged it! He was swift and I received the edge of a swipe round the ear, and in half a nano second I was outside the arcade, running like hell down the street. He chased me for some distance – and I knew it wasn't to return my penny! So I kept out of that arcade for some time.

Next month, we have 'The Dried Peas Crane Saga' and 'The Tale of the Pinball Glass'.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Jerry

We know you are always looking for magazine articles, so how about a Letters to the Editor page? This is your first letter. I hope readers will write or email snippets of information or just write to moan about the state of the vintage machine world, or just waste magazine space on a letters section.

Yours etc. etc.

Clive Baker

Dear Editor

May I be the first to congratulate you on your new letters page, it's a brilliant idea. I was thinking about this, that and the other (mostly the other) whilst pottering about in my shed, and wondered: could we have a series entitled 'Me and my Shed' or 'What I do in my Shed?' Readers could give us an insight into what really goes on behind shed doors, and could even include photographs to give us the full picture. My wife, like many others no doubt, shows little interest in this magazine, so you could be quite explicit about what there is behind those locked doors. I'm sure I'm not alone in wondering what other collectors get up to.

For myself, I've been a keen 'shedder' for over thirty years, and have amassed an awful lot of junk – far too much to bore you with. For instance, I once had three black and white Photo Me booths. However, they were crowded-out by fifty other penny machines, so reluctantly, I had to break them up. But I did keep the cameras and flash capacitors. Any use to anyone? I also have a broken coin-op barrel piano (the other one, which works, is in a garage – does this count as a shed)?

So readers, what goes on in your shed and what's stored therein? What's the oldest thing; what's the most cherished; what's the most bizarre? An Edwardian chamber pot perhaps, filled with Whitworth nuts and bolts? (not an ideal receptacle, as if the roof leaks, the potty fills with rainwater). Convince us that there is life out there and that there are other crazy nerds hoarding junk and half-finished restorations. Rummage round that hallowed store and describe on-going projects, dreams and nightmares. And if this feature gets support, I might even contribute an article myself.....But be warned, I have three big sheds and five garages full of stuff.

Clive Baker



Latest News from Cyprus

By Maurice Felce

One rainy Sunday a few years ago, I heard of an auction being held in Birmingham. It was advertised in the *Worlds Fair* by Joe Fletcher and it was some of his collection that was being sold. A few of you may remember it. In fact, some of you may have been there too.

Whilst many of the lots didn't sell, there was one particular box of bits and pieces that caught my eye. The said box contained a 'part' Caille Commercial mechanism and a section of the front door with some parts still attached. Sadly missing was the payout cup. My thoughts were initially to buy it for spares, and buy it I did! I knew that I had an ornate payout cup that could easily 'fit the bill' if necessary.

On arriving home and looking at the bits, I suddenly had a thought.....I may be able to get this working again. Spurred on by the thought that I already had a Caille Commercial in my collection meant it would be reasonably easy to copy any parts that may be needed. Also, having the door gave me a good indication as to the height of the machine.

Living here in Cyprus, I have plenty of time to devote to such projects and on closer inspection discovered that no major parts were missing. I eventually got the mech. working again but had to build a new cabinet. Now after spending many enjoyable and happy hours, you can see the finished machine.

P.S. If anyone knows the real name of this machine, please let me know.

Maurice

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Lot O' Fun & Me

By Paul Coppin

In 1964 I was fourteen years old and started work as a Saturday boy at the butchers owned by my family in Tooting, South London. I had always been mad keen on slot machines, particularly pin tables, and was amazed (and very pleased) to find an amusement arcade just four doors from the underground station at Tooting Broadway. I never gave it a thought at the time, but looking back now, it was very rare to find an arcade in a London suburb.

The arcade was called 'Lots-O-Fun' and what a rarity it was. In was in fact a pinball lounge with just a few other machines. There was a short row of allwins near the door and some Hi-Tops at the back, but the pride of place were twenty-four pintables in a row on the right-hand side. Looking back now, it was like a history of pinball. Of course, I can't remember them all, but as you will see later, I came to have good reason to remember most of them.

There were two very old pre-flipper games with electric scoring but no power bumpers that were 1d per play and paid 2d if you made better than the prize score. There was a very rare Williams **Gusher** based on oil wells. It was wooden railed with chrome cigarette rests on the rails, pre reel scoring of course and counted up in 10,000 segments. Other classics were Gottliebs **Kings and Queens** (one of the great pre-chip tables) and **Square Head**, as well as almost twenty others. I do remember two **Traffic Light** pinballs that paid out Polos if the machine stopped on green; I loved the way the Polos ran down the glass towards you if you won.

Even then, I wondered how anyone had got a licence to open an arcade in a town centre (very rare then, not like now) away from the coast or London's West End. I asked my father, who had lived and worked all his life in Tooting and it seems Lots-O-Fun started life as a shooting gallery in the 1930s with its own snack bar, and it slowly drifted into a pinball parlour.

The place was sleazy, complete with a change man in a white (?) coat and a roll-up constantly hanging from his lip. His hair was Brylcreamed down and his name was, of course, Lenny. Did you have to be called Lenny to work as a change man, or did you assume the name as part of the job? Incidentally, my mother told me not to go there because all the boys smoked! Fat chance of me not going.

Lenny cruised the arcade with his six-foot chain of keys and his busman's leather change bag dispensing the 3d bits that the machines ran on. But he had another job – paying out prizes, because the pintables had all been converted to pay out cigarettes for replays. Every three replays got you three fags, but only in batches of three. So three to five got you three gigs, six to eight got you six and so on.

There were a few other non pinball machines but I can't remember many. There was a large Seeburg jukebox and a huge free-standing baseball game, which flicked a ball at your bat and scored as to where you hit the ball. I remember you got a full nine innings. That machine would have been worth a fortune today.

The rear quarter of the building was walled off and was the repair shop. Two full time engineers worked there and it was an Aladdin's cave of parts and stripped down machines, and still showed signs of the old shooting gallery.

By 1966 I was working full time in the butchers and spending all my lunch hours in Lot-O-Fun. I didn't smoke, so was making a little profit selling my winnings to others at work. I had also got friendly with one of the engineers and he was teaching me pinball and fruit machine repair. I loved it.

There was a small office on a raised area where the money was counted and the fags were stored. Several times a week the owner, a big cigar smoking American called Earl, would hold court. I got to know him, and he too helped me to understand the workings of pinball machines.

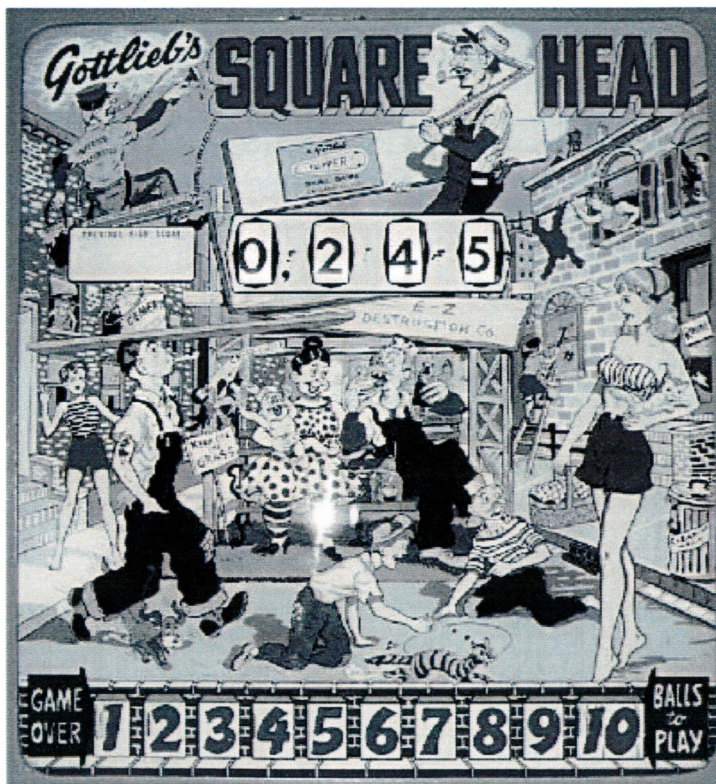
The place seemed to go on forever, unchanged, and by 1976 I was married with a new baby who was keeping me awake at night and costing a fortune. So when one day Earl asked me if I wanted to work part time at night as an engineer, it suited me down to the ground. After a few weeks in the Tooting arcade, which was busy during the day but not so much at night, I was moved to the West End to look after, on my own, two more Lots-O-Fun arcades, one in Waldour Street and one in Cambridge Circus. Now it was me who had the six foot chain of keys (but not the change bag, or rollup and I didn't change my name to Lenny), after all, I was an engineer, we had change machines and modern change men in booths (strangely, one of these, who was Asian, was called Len)!

These two arcades were mostly filled with fruit machines fed by the Chinese from Soho who came out late at night, and for the first time I saw just how much money was taken in. My job was mostly clearing overflowing cash boxes and keeping the change machines running. None of the machines were metered and no one really knew how much was passing through (and me with 200 keys)! People were always asking how I knew which key fitted which machine – an engineer's sworn secret which I shall take with me to the grave. But Earl trusted me, and I respected that. I'd work from 7pm till about 3am, mostly weekends, moving between the two arcades, which were separated by the liveliest part of Soho; it was great fun. Sometimes I'd do a day shift on a Sunday, which meant starting at 7am and checking and repairing all the machines in time for opening at 11am. I stayed there almost two years and loved it. One day Earl asked me to go full time, but I was progressing in the family business and said no. Soon after I left but stayed in touch.

In 1979 while minding the Tooting Lots-O-Fun, Earl was beaten up by three West Indians who were just lounging about selling drugs. Next day he shut down all the arcades and put them up for sale. I bought most of the machines, including the jukebox. I fixed them up and sold them on over a period of years. I always had a pinball in my home until I moved in the 1980s.

The Tooting arcade is still there but it's just a soulless high street slot machine arcade like dozens of others. I'm still at the butchers, which I now own. All I have from those days is the backflash from 'Square Head' and a lot of great memories. Oh, and I can usually fix a pre 1980 pinball.

Paul Coppin



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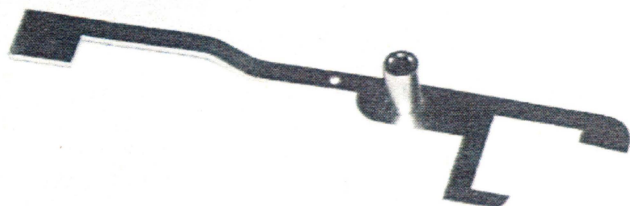
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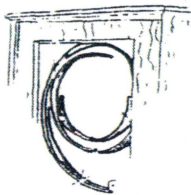
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17½" inside length

Middle 18" inside length
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ALLWIN SPARES

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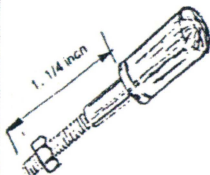
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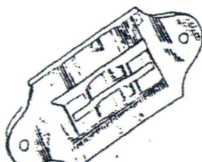
Win Tabs Red printer
on Silver foil sticky
backed 12 on a sheet



CHROMED 7 ball win
gallery. 6 x 1. 9/16



CHROMED THUMB
STOP



COIN SLOT
to suit 2p but can
be filed bigger

PRICE LIST

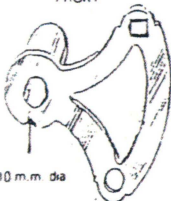
N01 Win Tabs (12 per
sheet) £15.25

N02 Ball Gallery £12.55

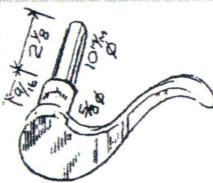
N03 Thumb Stop £6.25

N04 Coin Slot (2p)
£9.25

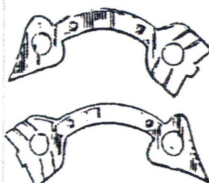
CHROMED TRIGGER
FRONT



10 m.m. dia



TRIGGER



CHROMED ARROWS
Reversible.

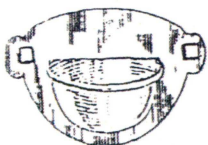
N05 Trigger Front £9.25

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N07 Payout Arrow
£2.55

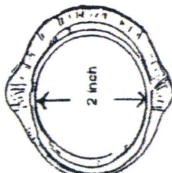
N08 Payout Bowl &
Surround £15.55

CHROMED PAYOUT BOWL

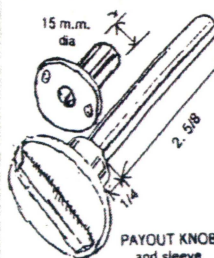


2 5/8 inch dia cup 2 x 0.25 inch fixing
squares at 3.75 inch centres.

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2 x tapped M5 fixing holes on
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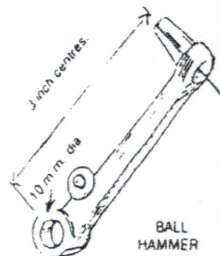
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and sleeve

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Sleeve £11.95

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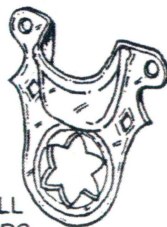


BALL
HAMMER

SPANDRELLS



BALL
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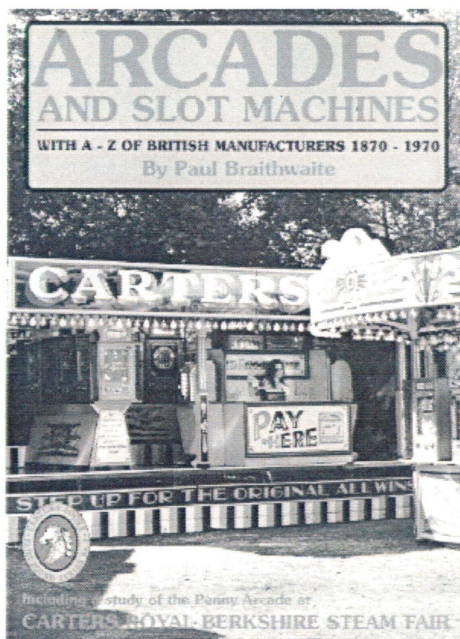
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